

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the abstract with the following:

A method for implementing a plurality of backoff counters ~~230~~ on a hardware backoff counter ~~210~~ for use in implementing a prioritized message transmission network is presented. A message with a smallest backoff time is selected and placed into the hardware backoff counter ~~210~~. When the hardware backoff counter ~~210~~ expires, the message is transmitted. Whenever the communications medium becomes busy, the backoff time for every message is updated.